

## LESLIE GOULD, *Financial Editor:*



# General Condemns Smoking Before All Evidence Is In

The tobacco stocks are selling around their lows for the year, off from 30 to 50 per cent from their bull market highs.

The whole market is down, but about the only other major investment that is off this much is the lowly regarded steels, and for a different reason. The steels did have a little Washington trouble in the early Spring.

In the case of the tobaccos, the main reason is the periodic scares linking smoking to cancer. Some of this is irresponsible, such as the latest.

### Free Smokes Taboo

Although not banning smoking by Air Force personnel, the deputy surgeon general of this arm of the military services has barred the distribution of free cigarettes to patients in Air Force hospitals. Major Gen. R. L. Bohannon, the deputy, also barred inclusion of free cigarettes in the packaged lunches served service personnel on long flights.

In a tough-worded directive, Gen. Bohannon said "the ever increasing evidence linking cigaret smoking with lung cancer, pulmonary diseases, cardiovascular diseases, etc., can no longer be ignored."

The general added that to "allow free distribution of cigarettes ... suggests to our personnel that the Air Force Medical Service, in effect, condones cigaret smoking."

### No New Evidence

First off, there is no new evidence linking smoking to cancer. In fact, the more recent studies raise the possibility the cause of lung cancer may be due to a virus.

Another fact is that the curve of lung

cancer has flattened out to around 34,000 cases a year, which, no matter what the cause, is not good. However, only 4,000 of the 34,000 cases are women, where there is the big increase in smoking.

### General 'Jumps the Gun'

The irresponsibility on the general's part comes in his "beating the gun," so to speak, on a study to be made by a 12-man committee of scientists into what, if any, relationship there is between smoking and cancer. U.S. Surgeon General Luther L. Terry has yet to name the committee. The idea for its creation has been endorsed by President Kennedy, to whom the report will be made.

Better taste on the general's part would have been to wait not only for the naming of this committee, but the report on its findings. This is to be a painstaking and lengthy investigation that, according to its announcement, will "go into '63."

While it was announced by the Air Force medical officer that the companies—plural—had been informed as to its decision, a check finds that only two companies have been supplying gift cigarettes and the notification went to the advertising agency of one of these. Some of the other companies only know what they read in the newspapers.

### Need Better Evidence

The Army is not following the Air Force in this, nor is the Navy making any changes.

As for a long-time smoker of cigarettes—a pack a day—plus cigars—about six a day—and a pipe, this writer isn't changing the tobacco habit until there is better evidence.

There is a favorable medical side to smoking—the calming effect on nerves.

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